

be a novelty to the oldest inhabitant of the metropolis."

A copy of the drawing referred to is given in the review, and the following extract from the explanatory statement by which it was accompanied.

"3. The society, therefore, propose that the line should be so far modified, that its present eastern terminus should be in front of the western towers, and that thence the line should be prolonged on the south side of the abbey, through great and little Dean's yard, leading directly to the new Houses of Parliament.

4. While suggesting this line of roadway, the society desire that it should interfere in the smallest possible degree with the legitimate connection between the abbey, the college, and the ecclesiastical buildings and residences attached. With this view they propose to accommodate as great a number of residents in immediate connection with the abbey as practicable, and to construct connecting archways across the roadway, forming covered communications between the abbey, the college, and the residences. At the same time, by the extension and restoration of the cloisters for the convenience of the residences, the most beautiful perspectives and effects of light and shade would be opened to the roadway. A picturesque foreground is obtained to the general elevation, as seen from the south; and it is from the south that all buildings should be viewed, from the superior effects produced by the direct rays of the sun.

6. The magnificent architectural combination of the cathedral buildings with the Victoria Tower of the new Houses of Parliament, which might thus be realized, would cost a very inconsiderable sum, as the buildings required to be removed are of very inconsiderable value, exclusive of that part of Abingdon-street which, it is understood, the Government have already determined to pull down without any reference to the present plan. The improved value of the ground available for building, should the plan be adopted, would, it is thought, be nearly equivalent for the purchase-money required in the first outlay.

7. The property belongs chiefly to the dean and chapter, and the proposed plan would allow of far more eligible sites than at present for the buildings required, either as connected with the abbey or the school.

The society, taking into consideration that we owe to the church the noblest architectural monuments in the world, cannot doubt the co-operation of the dean and chapter, and of the highest ecclesiastical authorities, if the object be favourably recommended to their attention by her Majesty's commissioners."

It is certainly within the bounds of possibility that another prior of St. Bartholomew may arise in Dean's yard; but at present, the dean and chapter of Westminster have the reputation of being hostile to all improvement connected with the abbey, or the district in which they reside. We believe this supposed hostility is merely indifference. The wretched state of their property arises from the system of forty-years leases, which is about to be changed. They have submitted no plans of improvement to the commission, and contemplate none, only, as they say, because they are not projectors of schemes they could not carry into effect. Sleeping men carry nothing into effect; and it is natural to deans and prebendaries to think more anxiously of preserving a secluded corner for quiet dreams than of Henry the Seventh or of Edward the Confessor. But what have we to do with a dean and chapter? They are but the trustees, not the owners, of Westminster Abbey; it is not for them to decide for the public what approaches shall or shall not be made either to the abbey or the imperial senate house. Let the nation look to its own.

An act of Vandalism is about to be perpetrated. It may yet be stopped. Without interfering with the progress of the private Bill Mr. Wason and his friends have introduced, powers may be taken by the Crown to reserve the question of the eastern terminus of the proposed street, or to repurchase, before new houses are built, the ground required to isolate the abbey, and complete in a satisfactory manner the approaches to the new Houses of Parliament.

We appeal to the Metropolitan Improvement Commissioners to revise their judgment, although at the eleventh hour. Among them

are men for whom we entertain the highest personal respect, but we would not see them shut their eyes (nor should the best friend they have) to the true nature of their position. They have undertaken the discharge of a great public duty; and they owe it to themselves—they owe it to their countrymen—they owe it to posterity, which, if we mistake not, will criticize their proceedings with more severity than the present age,—that the mischief now in progress should be remedied, ere it be too late."

THE DISTRICT SURVEYORS.

Sir,—In the *Times* of May 22nd, there are the following remarks:—

"The best friend to the lawyers is a crochety law reformer, who is permitted by the courtesy of Parliament to turn his conceits into statutes; but such a legislator is any thing but a blessing to his country. If, in addition to an irresistible inclination to alter, he happens to try his hand on subjects with which he is but imperfectly acquainted, the risk that the country, minus the lawyers, will run of regarding him with any thing but gratitude will be so much the greater."

Are not these observations, Mr. Editor, very applicable to the new Building Act? Again in the *Times* of May 24th:—

"The Hong Kong papers have been received, but they contain little more than a number of ordinances exhibiting extreme fertility of invention in the art of raising taxes" (*alias fees*). "Such legislation, as was to be expected, had produced considerable discontent, especially as it was feared, if commerce were shackled with so many burdensome regulations as were either in actual operation or proposed, merchants would resort to some port with a less active legislation."

Would not a *less active legislation* in building affairs be equally desirable?

The case of arbitrary and dictatorial supervision under which the profession labours by the working of the Metropolitan Buildings Act (as set forth by your correspondent "Mr. Thomas Little," in your paper of the 17th May) must come home to every professional man.

However, by the report in your paper of last week, 24th instant, of the decision of the official referees in the Lewisham case, there is a gleam of hope that the building world will not be so much annoyed and *badgered* as the inclination of some officials would cause them to be.

It is to be hoped that the frequent complaints of the system will have the effect of causing amendment, as dripping water operates, "*non erit, sed saepe cadendo*."

I am, Sir, &c.,

PHILOCLARUS.

Sir,—Some observations having been made through your journal against the new Buildings Act and the surveyors appointed to carry it into effect, allow me to state that, in my humble opinion (if honestly carried out), it is a great improvement on the old, and you will find the majority of the surveyors appointed under it are men of sound judgment; and I do hope before the public condemn the whole, they will observe in the several districts how their surveyors act, and report accordingly to the several magistrates in the respective counties, in order that efficient men may fill such offices; for it is a more serious matter than has been heretofore considered for the general good of the working class and the public.

I can assure you, with truth, that many buildings have been abandoned in the parish of Bermondsey, owing to the surveyor having been very litigious; and (if I am informed correctly), in six cases out of ten which have been forwarded to the registrar, he has failed. Now, if this be a fact, it is quite time one of our members for this county should move in the House of Commons for a return of the number of cases sent before the registrars under the new Metropolitan Buildings Act, and their results.

I think that would in a great measure make known who are the inefficient persons, and who are competent to fill the office of district surveyor.

Allow me to trespass further on your time, in giving you a statement of facts as to a circumstance which has occurred to me within

these last few weeks. My child having received a present last summer of a pair of pigeons, I had a house, or cage, made for them at the back of my dwelling, but finding I had not made it sufficiently high for the child to view the birds from the window of the sitting-room, I had it raised four feet higher, merely elevating the same covering and enclosing it with lattice-work. This was done either the last of December or beginning of January; be that as it may, I have received notice after notice from the district surveyor to pull it down; and at last a meeting of the referees, who, after some conversation on the subject, viewed; but I have not yet heard the result: when I do, I shall feel great pleasure in forwarding the same to your journal for the benefit of the public. I send you a copy of the several notices received, as also the questions to the referees.

Can you inform me if or not I can proceed for the expenses I have been put to in opinions on the Act, caused to be taken through the receipt of the several notices,—not wishing to act on my own opinion, which is, that the district surveyor has no jurisdiction over it, and which I find to be the opinion of most surveyors? Leaving you to make what use you please of these.

I am, Sir, &c.,

W. S. HOLLAND.

Bermondsey-square, May 24th.

* As this matter is now before the referees it would be unwise to discuss it. When the award is taken up we will give attention to it.

The new number of the Westminster Review (for June), has the following note:—

"An occupier of premises in the city wished to introduce in his house some of the zinc ventilators recommended by Dr. Arnott (price 2s.), but was informed that before any cutting in an external or party wall (without which they could not be inserted), notice must be given to the district surveyor, pursuant to section 13; and a fee paid. On consulting the list of fees in schedule L, it appeared that the fee would be 1*l.* 15*s.*, the house being a first-rate, and possibly 3*l.* 3*s.* if the cutting were made in a chimney breast. The official referees had, however, the power to reduce the fee if they thought proper, and an application to them would only cost a guinea for the hearing. The ventilators are, of course, deferred for the present; and as the act makes no mention of any apertures for ventilation beyond a window and a chimney, it is to be hoped the official referees will publish some instructions on the subject, without waiting till an object of such importance is brought before them on appeal. All decisions, however, of the official referees should be advertised and sold, with the act, or they will be useless to the public, as district surveyors do not hold themselves bound to supply information gratis. The act does not enjoin them to give any assistance to a builder in the form of explanation or advice, but, on the contrary, it places them in the position of public informers, profiting by every error committed; one fee being chargeable if the act be duly observed, treble fees in every case of neglect."

We may again mention that all awards made by the referees are open to the public on payment of 6*d.* for each *class* of awards consulted. We have taken some pains to communicate to the public all the most important decisions pronounced by the official referees, and shall continue to do so, with even greater minuteness, as we are satisfied we may thus prevent much litigation and ill-feeling.

The district surveyors meet periodically, for the discussion of the various questions which arise from the act: if they would enable us to place the result of their deliberations before the public also, difficulties would sooner cease, and much advantage be gained.

REDUCTION IN THE PRICE OF GAS.—Mr. Hedley stated a few days since before the committee of the House of Commons on the Caledonian Railway, that in consequence of improvements effected by him in the manufacture of gas, so great a saving in price to the consumer had been effected, that in Liverpool alone it amounted per annum to 20,000*l.* He further stated, that all over Scotland the gas was better in quality than in England, owing to the superiority of gas-coal in the north.